a good woman

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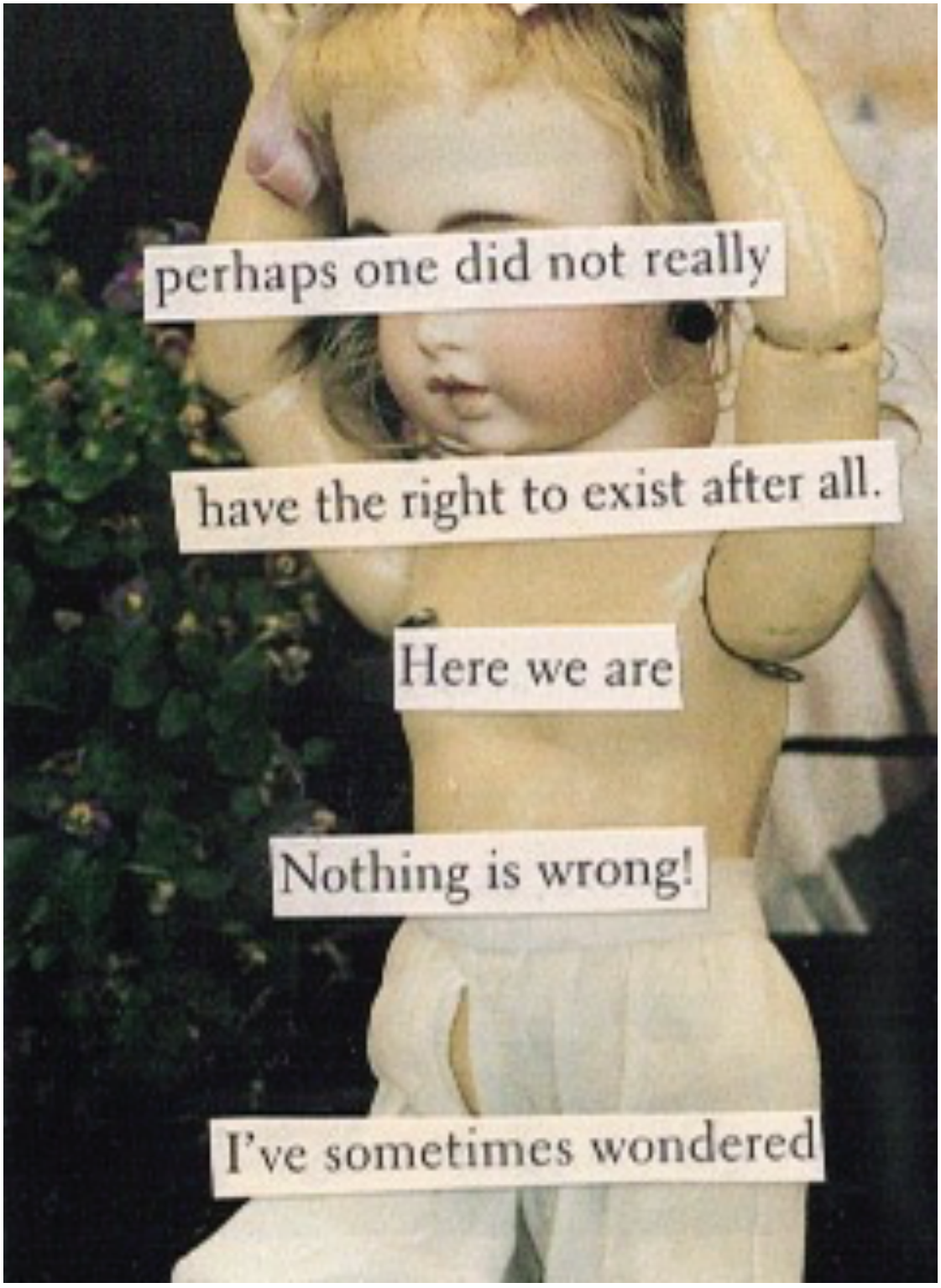
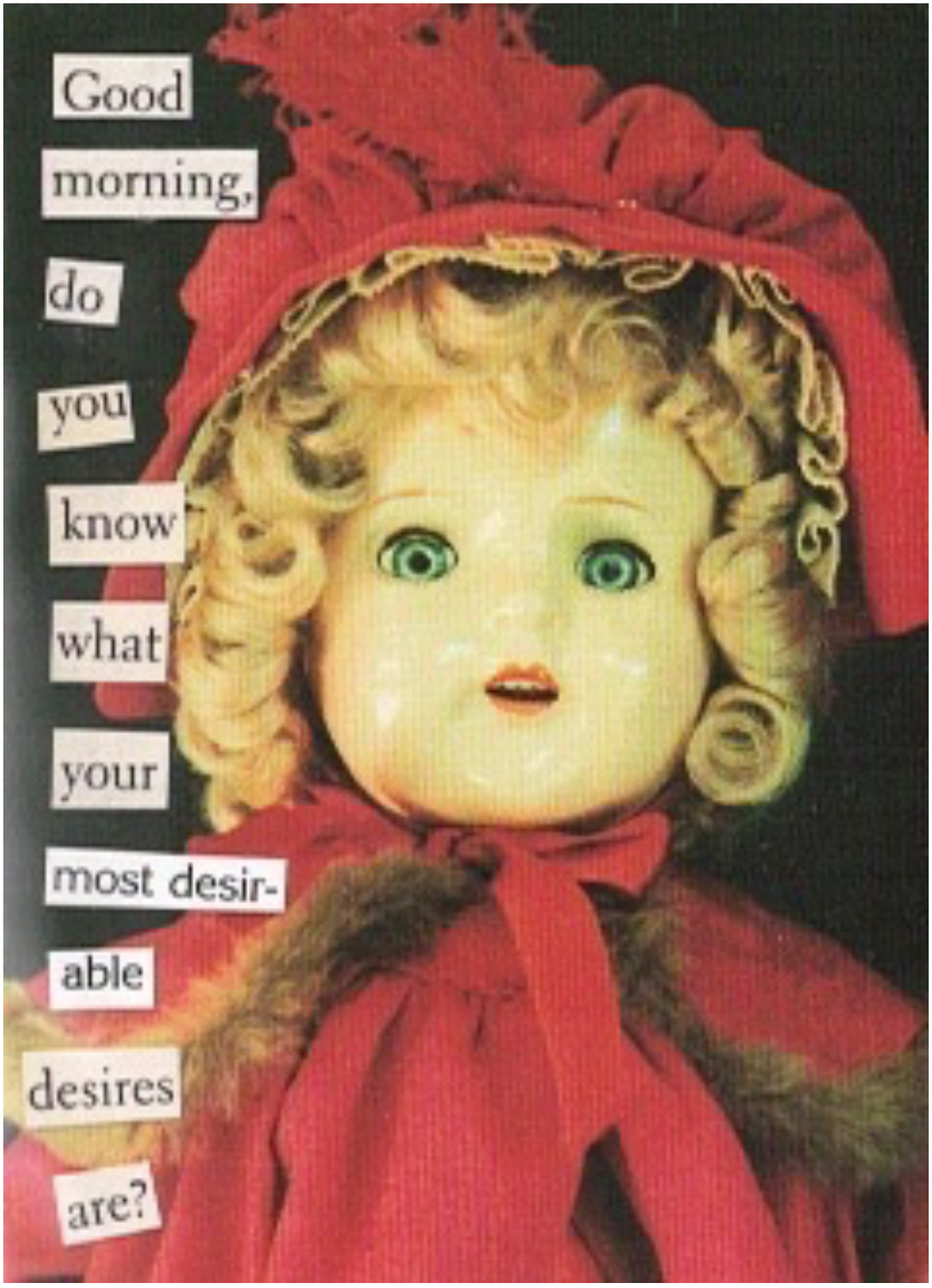
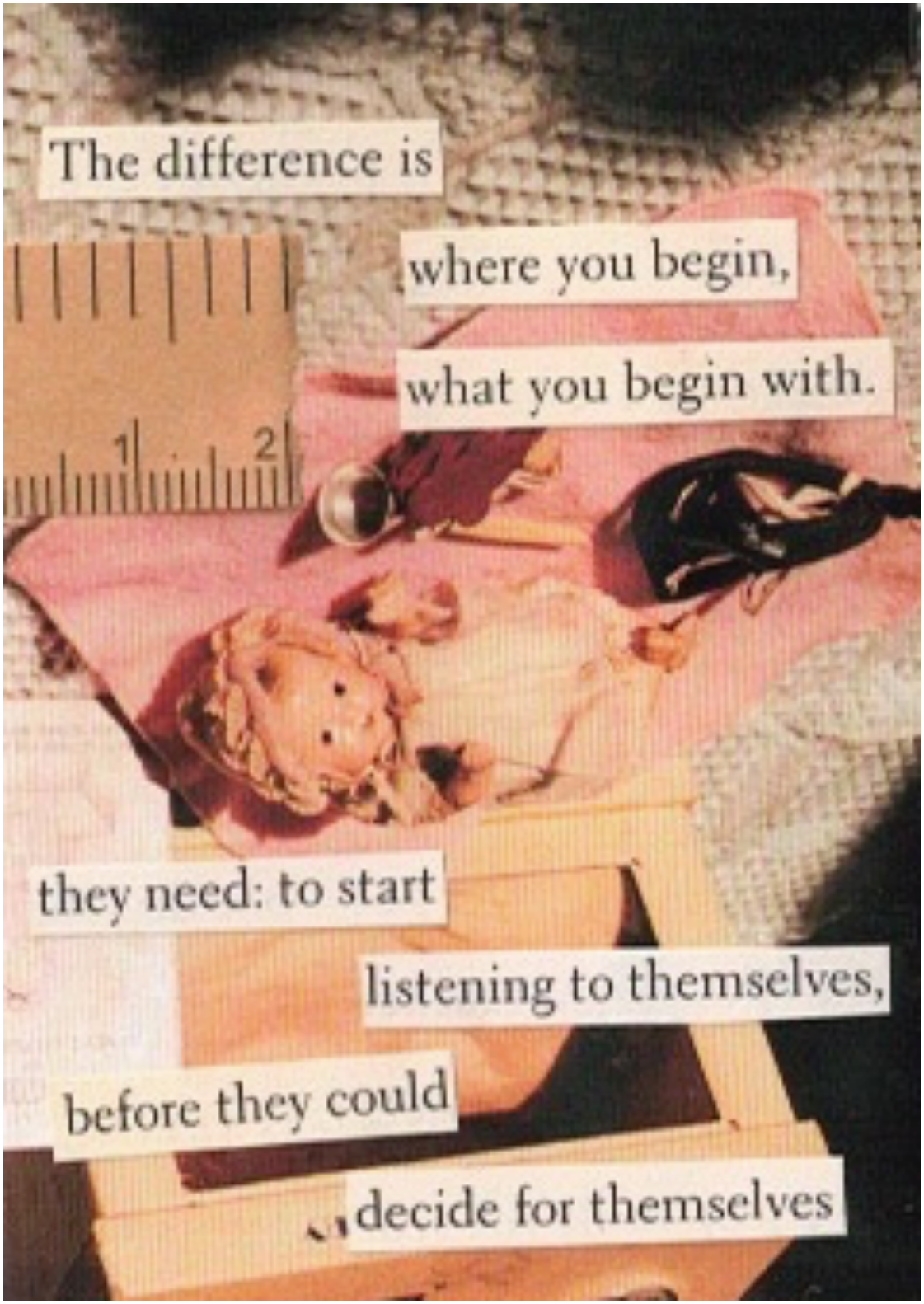
chicago
2026

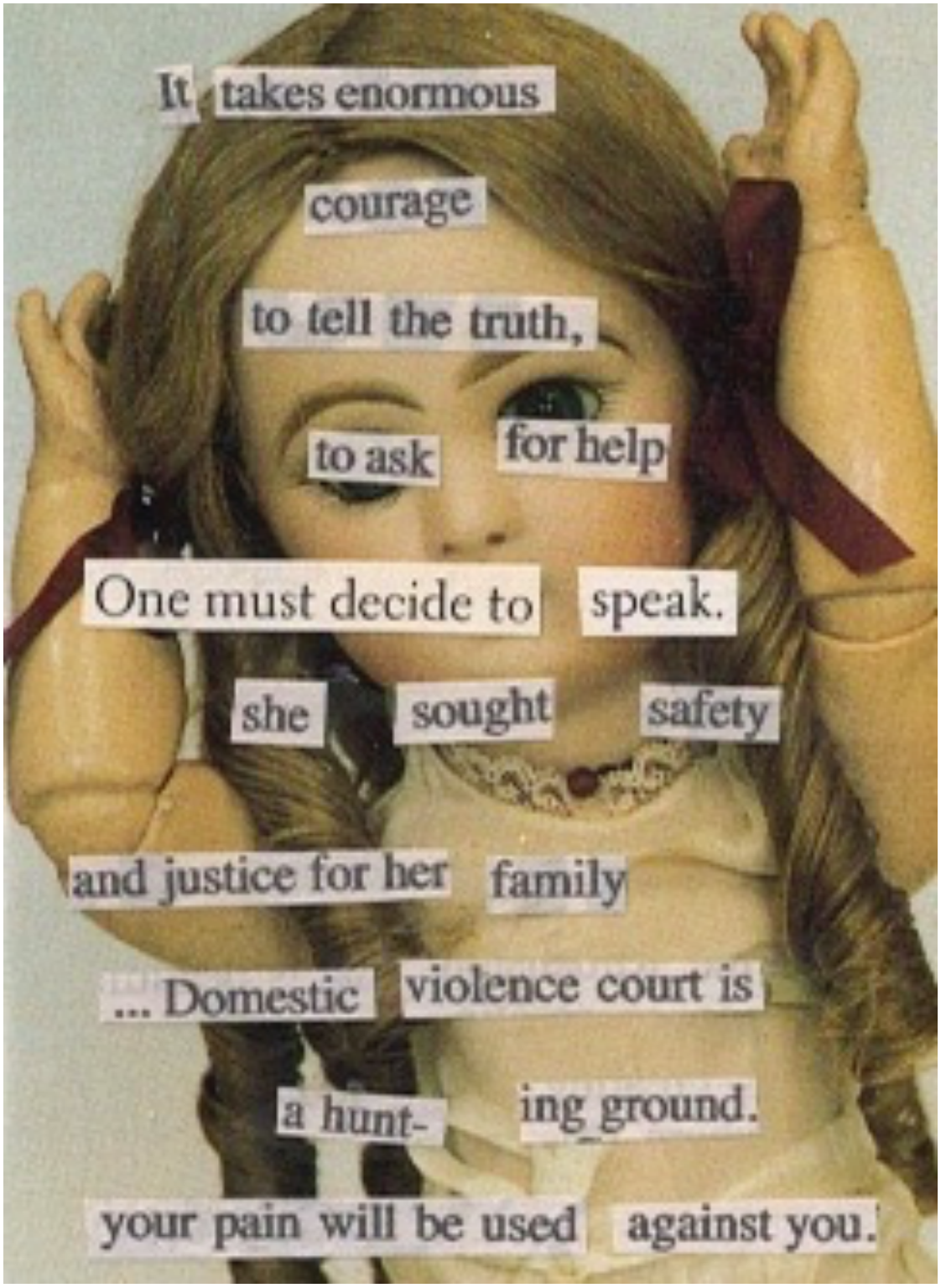
All my life I have been a good woman,
compliant, neat,
I tied my blue laces, postponed my awe.
I aim to *please.*
just *like everything else*
I do it exceptionally well,
I twist the fabric
play with matches.
go wild
I'll fix this, I sang

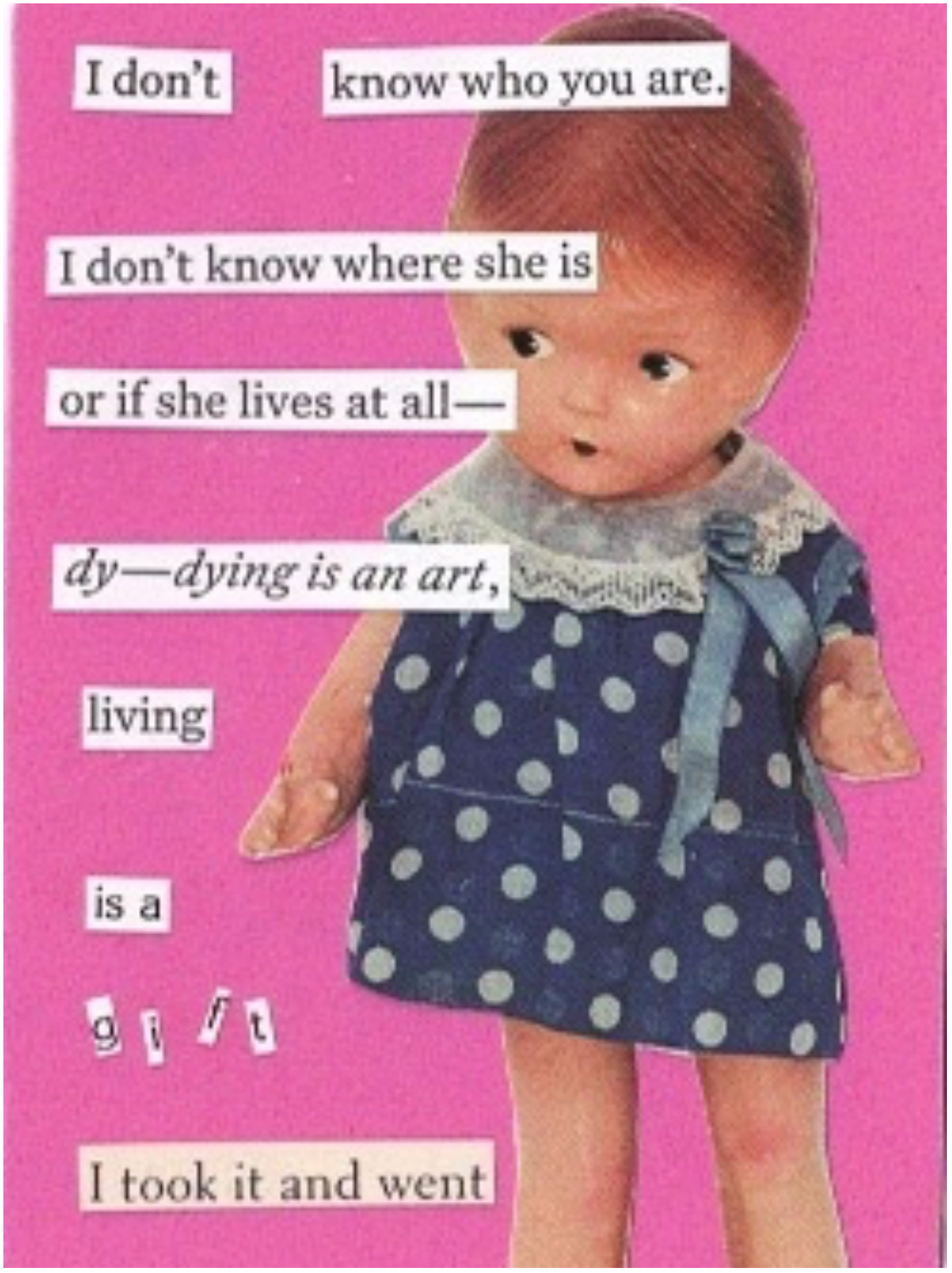

perhaps one did not really
have the right to exist after all.
Here we are
Nothing is wrong!
I've sometimes wondered

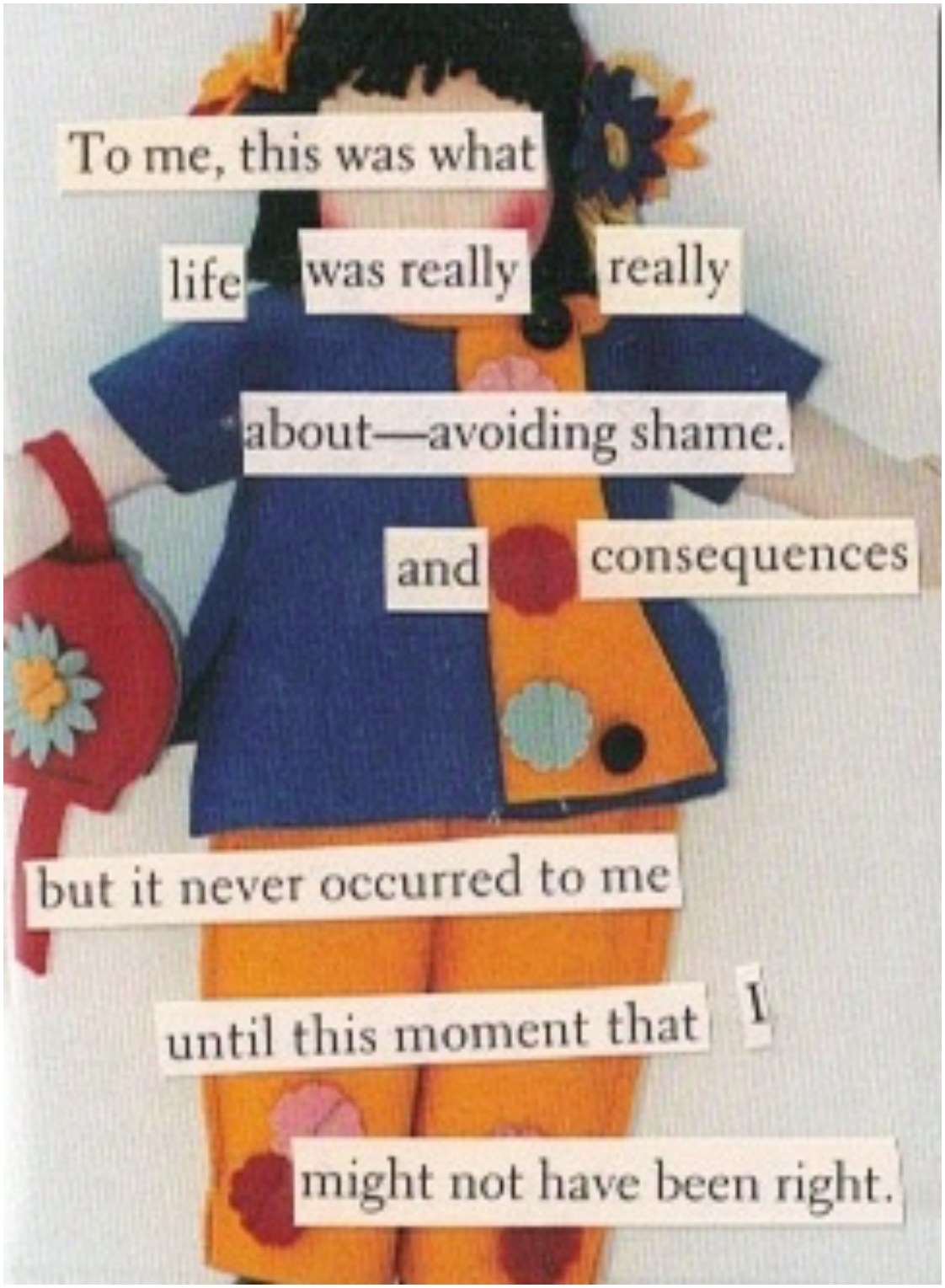

Good
morning,
do
you
know
what
your
most desir-
able
desires
are?

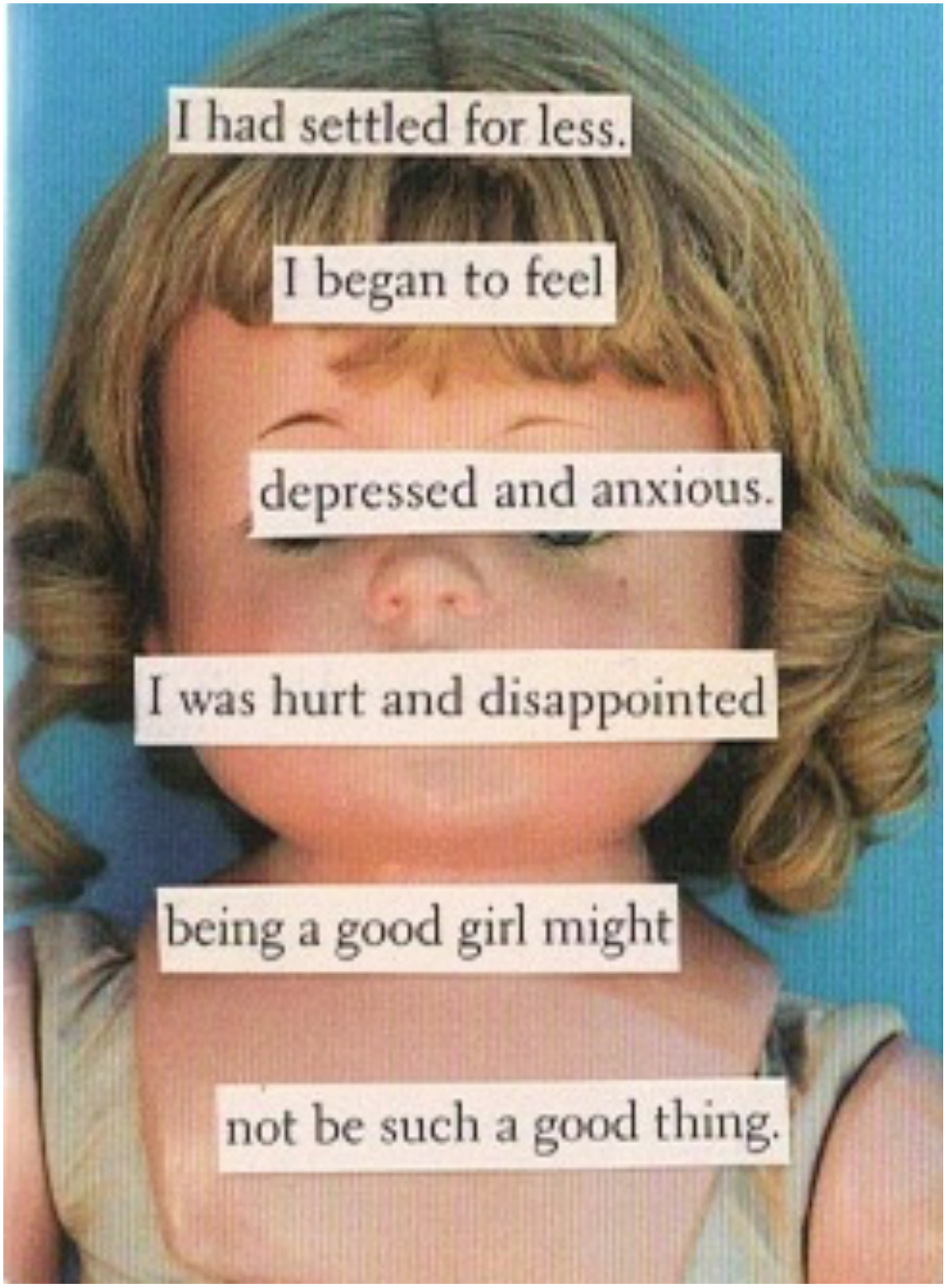
Who do you think you are?
full of purpose—
With your
golden hair
and your
light frocks
and your
love of fun
intrepid,
fearless
Just who do you think you are?

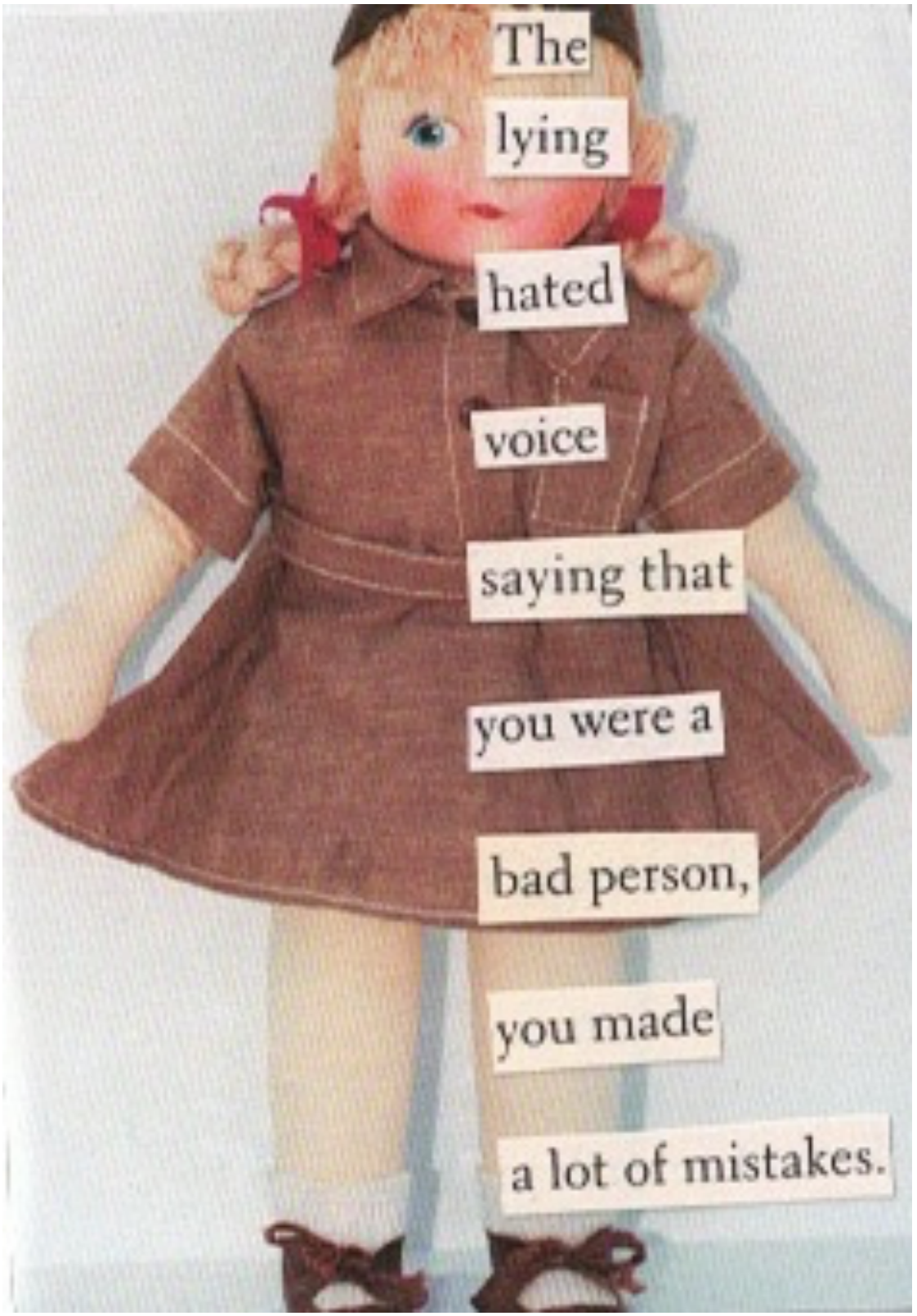

The difference is
where you begin,
what you begin with.
they need: to start
listening to themselves,
before they could
decide for themselves

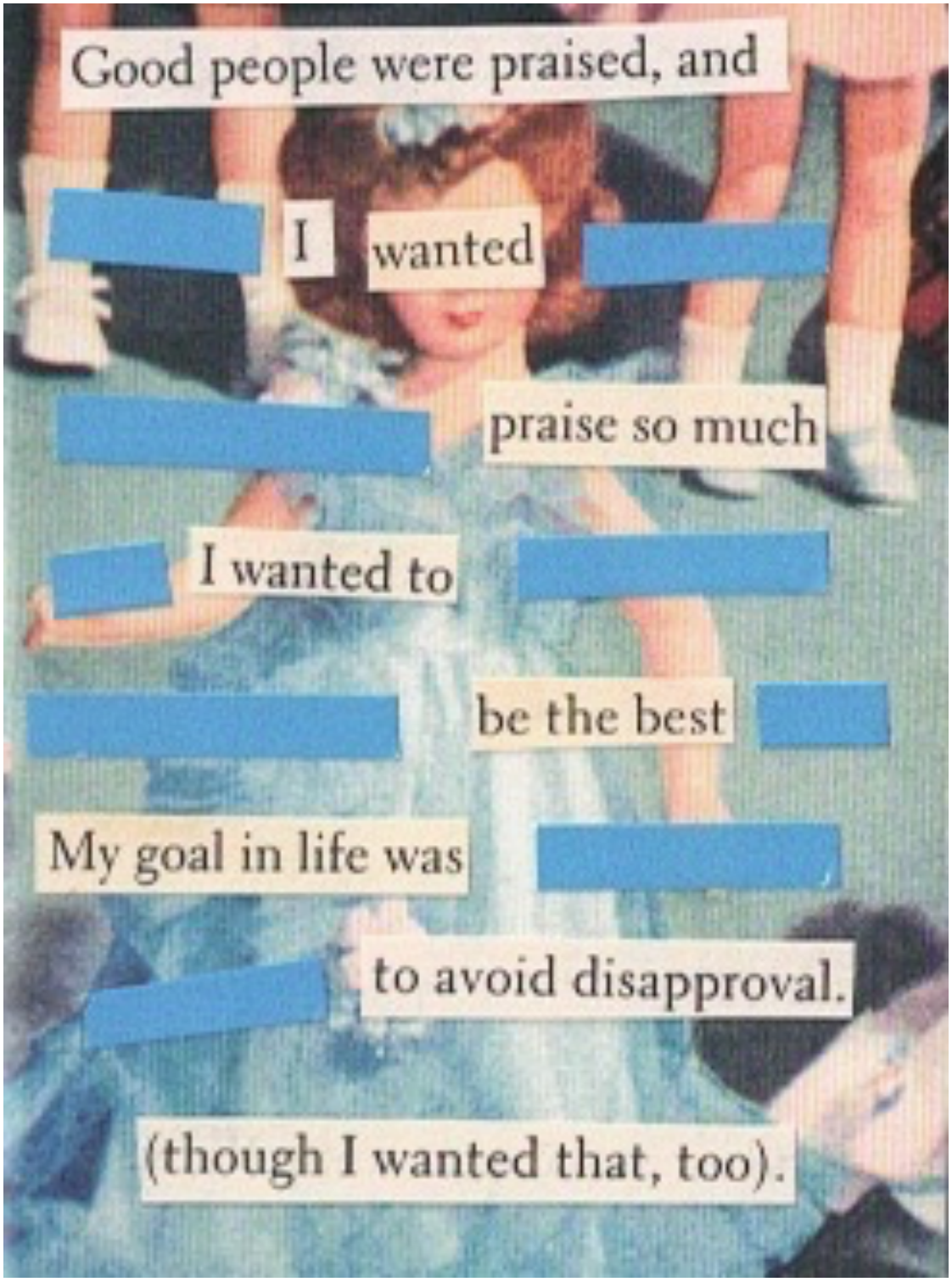

It takes enormous
courage
to tell the truth,
to ask for help
One must decide to speak.
she sought safety
and justice for her family
... Domestic violence court is
a hunt- ing ground.
your pain will be used against you.

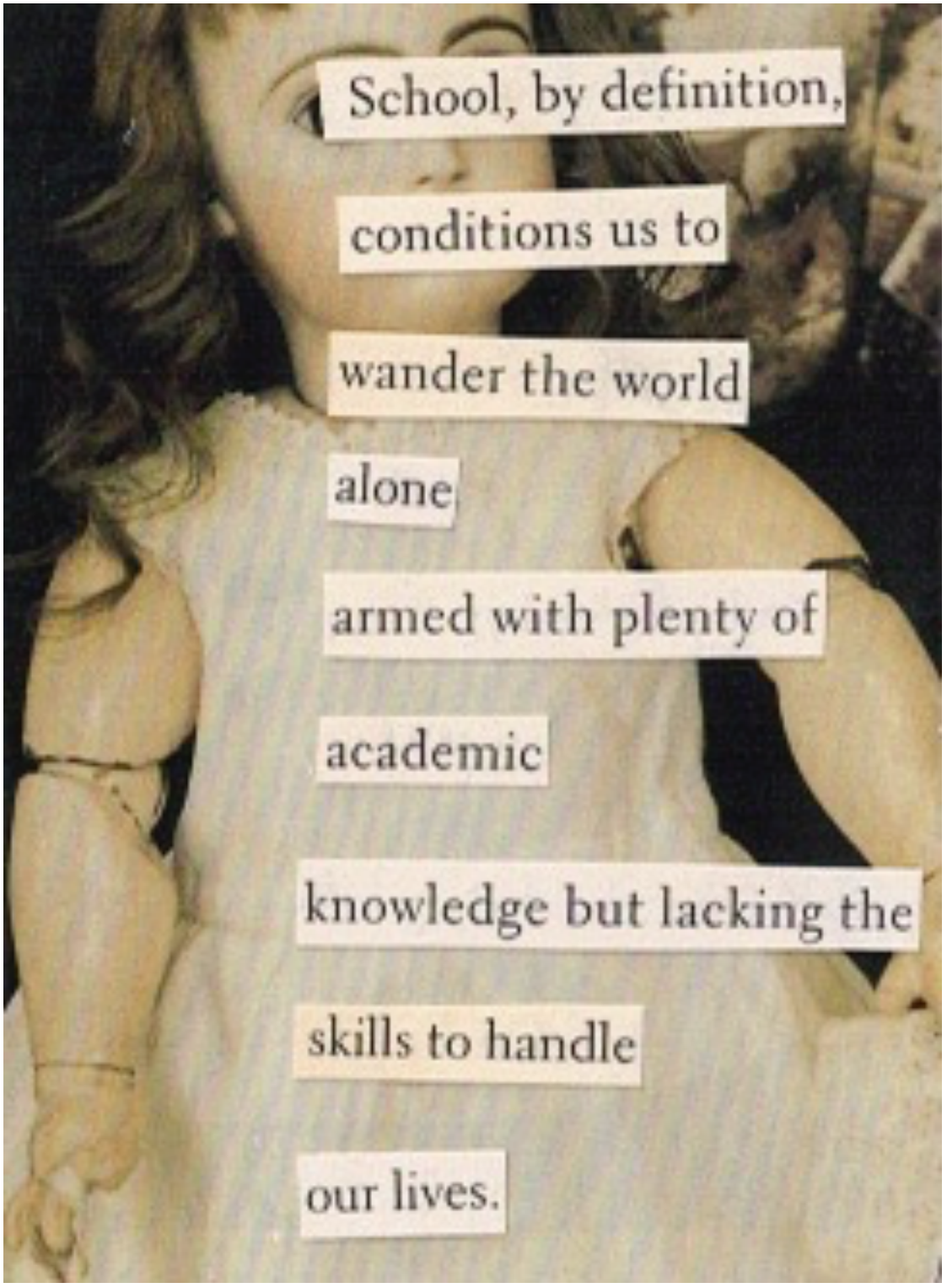

I don't know who you are.
I don't know where she is
or if she lives at all—
dy—dying is an art,
living
is a
g i f t
I took it and went

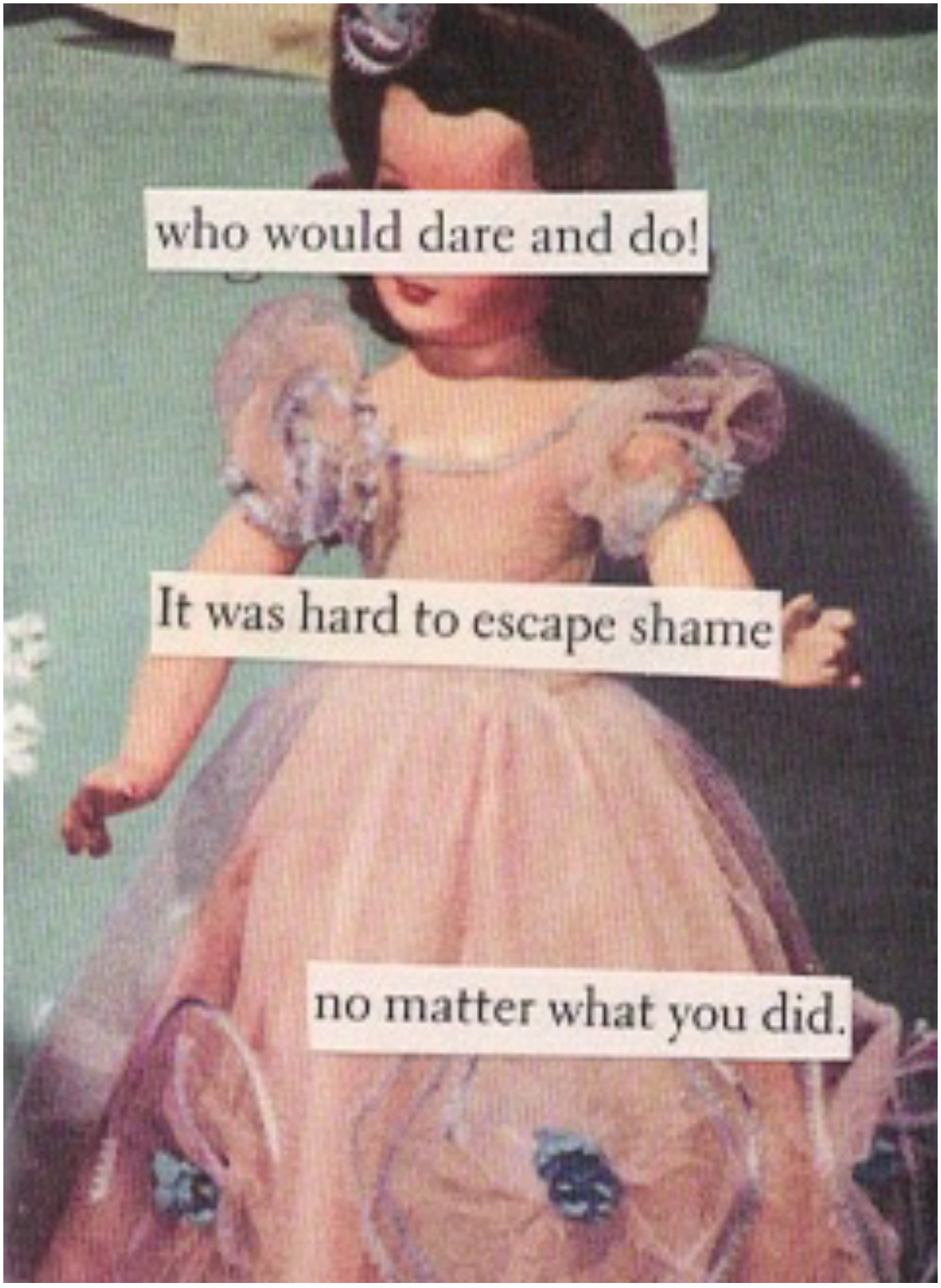

To me, this was what
life was really really
about—avoiding shame.
and consequences
but it never occurred to me
until this moment that I
might not have been right.


I had settled for less.
I began to feel
depressed and anxious.
I was hurt and disappointed
being a good girl might
not be such a good thing.


The
lying
hated
voice
saying that
you were a
bad person,
you made
a lot of mistakes.


Good people were praised, and
I wanted
praise so much
I wanted to
be the best
My goal in life was
to avoid disapproval.
(though I wanted that, too).


School, by definition,
conditions us to
wander the world
alone
armed with plenty of
academic
knowledge but lacking the
skills to handle
our lives.


who would dare and do!
It was hard to escape shame
no matter what you did.

mainly a mash-up of
a life in school:
what the teacher learned
by jane tompkins &
v*ictorian doll secrets: underclothing*
& antique dolls in original costumes
by mildred seeley

compiled in my basement,
hyde park,
chicago,
may 2026